

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 7092

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to honor David Butler on his retirement as executive director of the Knoxville Museum of Art.

WHEREAS, it is our privilege to recognize those leaders in the artistic community whose cultural stewardship and commitment to excellence have contributed to the thriving arts landscape in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is David Butler, executive director of the Knoxville Museum of Art (KMA), who recently announced his retirement in December 2023, bringing to a close seventeen years of exceptional leadership with the organization; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Butler began his role as KMA executive director in 2006; under his leadership, the museum has sharpened its focus, raised its profile, and increased its engagement with the community and the entire East Tennessee region; and

WHEREAS, David Butler oversaw the 2008 opening of the permanent exhibition *Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee* and the subsequent opening of *Currents: Recent Art from East Tennessee and Beyond*, also a permanent exhibition; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the museum underwent a comprehensive renovation of nearly \$6 million, supported by a successful community capital campaign, in preparation for the installation of *Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity*, the world's largest figural glass assemblage, created by acclaimed Knoxville artist Richard Jolley; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Butler was also instrumental in the ambitious effort to build the museum's collection of paintings by Knoxville native Beauford Delaney; the KMA now holds more works by this great twentieth-century painter than any other public institution; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his nearly two-decade tenure, Mr. Butler has ensured KMA's solid financial position, consistently operating in the black and doubling its annual operating budget to just over \$2 million, all while offering free admission, a policy instituted under his charge in 2008; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded in his profession, Mr. Butler has served as president of the Southeastern Museums Conference (2014-2016), a board member of Tennesseans for the Arts, a panelist for the Tennessee Arts Commission, and a peer reviewer for the American Alliance of Museums, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services; and

WHEREAS, prior to coming on board at KMA, David Butler served as executive director of the Ulrich Museum of Art at Wichita State University in Kansas, the Swope Art Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana, and the Emerson Gallery at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York; and

WHEREAS, he holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Florida State University and a Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Butler has helped shape the Knoxville Museum of Art into an outstanding organization that celebrates East Tennessee's rich, diverse visual culture and its connections to the wider currents of world art, and it is most fitting that we recognize him at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend David Butler as he takes his leave as executive director of the Knoxville Museum of Art, commending his tireless devotion and creative vision and extending our best wishes for every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.